the house of the *nongsiat*, where a *puja* is performed to some local deity, before the flesh is distributed. At Shangpung, when a tiger or a mithan is killed, the head is cut off, and is carried in triumph to a hill in the neighbourhood where there is a *duwan*, or altar, at the foot of an oak tree (*dieng sning*). The head is displayed on the altar, and worship offered to *u 'lei lyngdoh*, the God of the doloiship.

The Khasis make use of an ingenious species of spring gun for killing game, the spring gun being laid alongside a deer path in the jungle. A string stretched across the path, when touched, releases a bolt and spring, which latter impels a bamboo arrow with great force across the path. This spring gun is called *ka riam siat*. A pit-fall, with bamboo spikes at the bottom, is called *u 'liw lep*, and a trap of the pattern of the ordinary leopard trap is called *ka riam slung*. A noose attached to a long rope laid in a deer run is named *riam syrwiah*.

There is also *ka riam pap*, the principle of which is that an animal is attracted by a bait to walk on to a platform; the platform sinks under the weight of the animal, and a bolt is released which brings down a heavy roof from above weighted with stones, which crush the animal to death.

There are several means employed in snaring birds; one of the most common is to smear pieces of bamboo with the gum of the jack-tree, the former being tied to the branches of some wild fruit tree, upon which, when the fruit is ripe, the birds light and are caught by the bird lime. This is called *ka riam thit*. Another is a kind of spring bow made of bamboo which is laid on the ground in marshy places, such as are frequented by snipe and woodcock. This form of snare is unfortunately most common. A third is a cage into which birds are lured by means of a bait, the cage being hidden in the grass, and the entrance being so contrived that the birds can hop in but not out again. This is called *ka riam sim*.

FISHING.

Although there are some Khasis who fish with rod and line, it may be said that the national method of fishing is to poison

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the streams. Khasis, except the Wárs and the people of Shella, unlike the Assamese and Bengalis, do not fish with nets, nor do they use the bamboo-work device known by the Assamese as *pala* (পল) and *jakai* (জকাই). The method of fish-poisoning of the Khasis is the same as that described by Soppitt in his account of the tribes inhabiting North Cachar. The following is a description of how Khasis poison fish in the western portion of the district; it may be taken as a sample of the whole. A large quantity of the bark of the tree *ka mynta* and the creeper *u khariew* is first brought to the river-side to a place on the stream a little above the pool which it is proposed to poison, where it is thoroughly beaten with sticks till the juice exudes and flows into the water, the juice being of a milky white colour. In a few minutes the fish begin to rise and splash about, and, becoming stupefied, allow themselves to be caught in the shallows. If the beating of the bark has been well carried out, many of the fish soon die and after a time float on the surface of the water. A large number of Khasis stand on the banks armed with bamboo scoops shaped like small landing nets, to catch the fish, and fish traps (*ki khowar*) Assamese *khokái* (খোকা) are laid between the stones in the rapids to secure any fish that may escape the fishing party. Another fish poison is the berry *u soh lew*, the juice of which is beaten out in the same manner as described above.

Soppitt says, certain fish do not appear to be susceptible to the poison, and not nearly the destruction takes place that is popularly supposed. The mahseer and the carp family generally do not suffer much, whereas, on the other hand, the river shark, the *bagh mas* of the Bengalis, is killed in large numbers. It is impossible, however, in the opinion of the writer, that the mahseer fry, which abound in these hill rivers in the spring and early summer months, can escape being destroyed in great numbers when the streams are frequently poisoned. In the neighbourhood of lime quarries and other large works where dynamite is used for blasting, this explosive is sometimes employed for killing fish. The practice, however, has been strictly prohibited, and there have been some cases in which the offenders have been punished in the courts. Fish-poisoning is bad enough, but dynamiting is still worse, as with an effective

cartridge all the fish within a certain area are killed, none escape. When poisons are used, however, some fish are not affected by them, and others are only stupefied for the time being and afterwards recover.

FOOD.

The Khasi and Syntengs ordinarily take two meals a day, one in the early morning and the other in the evening, but labourers and others who have to work hard in the open take a midday meal as well, consisting of cold boiled rice wrapped in a leaf (*ka já-song*), cakes (*ki kpu*) and a tuberous root (*u solphlang*) which is eaten raw. They are fond of all kinds of meat, especially pork and beef, although some of the Syntengs, owing to Hindu influence, abstain from eating the latter. Unlike the neighbouring Naga, Garo and Kuki tribes, the Khasis abstain from the flesh of the dog. Both Bivar and Shadwell say the reason why the Khasis do not eat the flesh of the dog is because he is in a certain sense a sacred animal amongst them. There is a Khasi folk-tale relating how the dog came to be regarded as the friend of man. It is, however, quite possible that the Khasis may never have eaten the flesh of the dog from remote times, and it is nothing extraordinary that the Khasis should differ in a detail of diet from the neighbouring Thibeto-Burman tribes which are so dissimilar to them in many respects. The Khasis, except some of the Christian community and some of the people of the Mawkhar, do not use milk, butter, or ghee as articles of food. In this respect they do not differ from the Kacharis and Rabhas of the plains or the Garos of the hills. The Mongolian race in its millions as a rule does not use milk for food, although the Tibetans and some of the Turcoman tribes are exceptions. Before fowls or animals are killed for food, prayers must be said, and rice sprinkled on the body of the animal. The staple food of the Khasis is rice and dried fish. When rice cannot be obtained or is scarce, millet or Job's tears are used instead. The latter are boiled, and a sort of porridge is obtained, which is eaten either hot or cold according to fancy. Khasis eat the flesh of nearly all wild animals, they

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WORSHIP OF NATURAL FORCES AND OF DEITIES.

133 In the Khasi Hills, especially on the southern side, there are numerous rivers, sometimes of considerable size, which find their way to the Sylhet plains through very deep valleys, the rivers flowing through narrow channels flanked by beetling cliffs which rise to considerable altitudes. The scenery in the neighbourhood of these beautiful rivers is of the most romantic description, and the traveller might imagine himself in Switzerland were it not for the absence of the snowy ranges. Of such a description is the scenery on the banks of the river Kenchi-
823 yong, the Jádukátá * or Punatit of the plains. It is in the bed
776 of the river, a few miles below Rilang, that there is the
782 curiously-arched cavity in the rock which resembles an upturned boat, which the Khasis call *Ka lieng blei* (the god's boat), and the plains people Bashanya's ship. Near to this, on the opposite side of the river, there is a rock bearing a Persian inscription, but so defaced by the action of the water as to be impossible to decipher. Like other inhabitants of mountainous countries, the Khasis reverence the spirits of fell and fall, and
226 propitiate them with offerings at stated times. A brief descrip-
782 tion of the ceremonies which are performed at Rilang, on the
776 occasion when the annual fishing in the river Punatit takes
787 place, may be of interest. The three Siems of Nongstoin, Langrin, and Nobosohpoh each sacrifice a goat to *Ka blei sam um* (the goddess of the river) before the boatmen can cast in their nets. In former times they say the passage up the river was obstructed by the goddess, who took the form of an immense crocodile: but she was propitiated by the gift of a goat, and the boatmen were then allowed to pass up the river in their boats. Hence it became necessary for the owners of the fishery to sacrifice annually a goat each to the goddess. At the time of my visit each Siem's party erected an altar in the bed of the river, in the midst of which a bough of the Khasi oak (*dieng suing*) was planted. The goats were then decapitated, it being considered an essential that the head

* Lit.: Cut by magic.

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should be severed with one blow. As soon as the head was cut off there was a rush on the part of the sacrificers to see in which direction the head faced. If the head faced towards the north or west, it was considered an evil omen; if it faced towards the south or east, a good omen. The east is a lucky quarter amongst the Assamese also. The people ended up the proceedings by giving a long-drawn-out, deep-toned chant, or *kynhoi*. Immediately after the ceremony was concluded hundreds of boats shot out from the numerous creeks, where they had been lying, and fished the river all night, the result being an immense haul, to the delight of the Lynngams, who were seen next morning roasting the fish whole on bamboo stakes, after which they consumed them, the entrails being eaten with great gusto. Such is the worship of the goddess of the Punatit.

Similar pujas take place among the people of Wár-ding (the valley of fire) before they fish in the Khai-mara river and elsewhere in the Khasi Hills. In the Jaintia Hills there is the Synteng-worship of the Kopili river, which used to be accompanied by human sacrifices, as has been mentioned above, pp. 102-104. The Myntang river, a tributary of the Kopili, must also be annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat. Numerous hills also are worshipped, or rather the spirits which are said to inhabit them. One of the best known hill godlings is the deity who is thought to inhabit the little wood close to the summit of the Shillong Peak. This deity is said to have been discovered by a man named "U Shillong," who gave his name to the Shillong Peak, and indirectly to our beautiful hill station. The Siems of Mylliem and Nongkrem reverence *U'lei Shillong*, and there are certain clans who perform periodical sacrifices to this god. Probably the origin of the superstitious reverence with which U'lei Shillong is held by the Siems of Nongkrem and Mylliem is that their fabled ancestress "Ka Pah Syntiew," of whom an account will be found in the folk-lore section, took her origin from a rock not far from the Shillong Peak in the Nongkrem direction.

Rableng Hill, which is within full view of the Shillong Peak in an easterly direction, is also said to be the abode of a minor god who is periodically propitiated by the members of the Máwthoh clan of the Khyrim State with a he-goat and a cock.

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wood are placed around the body, and the egg; "*u'leng kpoh*," is broken, not over the stomach of the deceased, as has been sometimes supposed, but by being thrown on the pyre in the direction of the feet of the corpse. Fire is applied to the pyre, first by the *kur*, or members of the clan, and then by the children, if any, of the deceased. Another fowl, "*u'iar padat*," is sacrificed, its blood being smeared round the pyre three times, and across the corpse three times. The bier is then broken to pieces, the cloths having been removed from it previously. The eatables and the jaw-bones of the sacrificial animals are then placed at the head of the pyre. After the fowl (*u'iar padat*) has been sacrificed, the three arrows already mentioned are shot from the bow, one to the north, another to the south, and the third to the east. These arrows are called *ki 'nam tynrpem*. It is, perhaps, significant that the arrows which are shot at death correspond in numbers with those which are used at the time of the birth ceremony. When the fire has blazed up, another goat, "*u'lang dholia*," is sacrificed. In some cases all the clothes of the deceased are burnt with the body, in others the clothes are merely held over the fire and then taken away, after which they can be used (this is only in the case of poor persons). Before leaving the burning-place the relatives and friends of the deceased place betel-nuts on the pyre and bid farewell to the deceased, saying "*Khublei khie leit tam kwai sha iing u Blei ho*" (good-bye, go and eat betel-nut in the house of god). When the body has been thoroughly burnt, the fire is extinguished with water, and the uncalcined bones are collected by the relatives in three trips. The collectors are not allowed to turn back and pick up a bone which has been forgotten in any one of these trips. The bones thus collected are carefully wrapped in a piece of white cloth by the female relatives, and an old member of the family throws on the ground some powdered rice from a leaf, at the same time adjuring the spirit of the deceased not to trouble the *kur*, or the family, as the funeral ceremonies have been duly performed. The party then sets out to the bone repository, or *mawshieng*. In front walks one who strews along the line of route leaves of the tree known by the Khasis as *dieng shit* (the berries of which are used for fishing with), and grains of rice, all the way from the pyre to the cairn.

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quilt, made out of the bark of a tree, which is beaten out and then carefully woven, several layers of flattened bark being used before the right thickness is attained. This quilt is called by the Lyngams "*Ka syllar*" (Garo *simpak*). Food is cooked in earthen pots, but no plates are used, the broad leaves of the *mariang* tree taking their place. The leaves are thrown away after use, a fresh supply being required for each meal.

The Lyngams brew rice beer, they do not distil spirit; the beer is brewed according to the Khasi method. Games they have none, and there are no jovial archery meetings like those of the Khasis. The Lyngam methods of hunting are setting spring guns and digging pitfalls for game. The people say that now the Government and the Siem of Nongstoin have prohibited both of these methods of destroying game, they no longer employ them. But I came across a pitfall for deer not long ago in the neighbourhood of a village in the Lyngam country. The people declared it to be a very old one: but this I very much doubt, and I fear that these objectionable methods of hunting are still used. The Lyngams fish to a small extent with nets, but their idea of fishing, *par excellence*, is poisoning the streams, an account of which has already been given in this monograph. The Lyngams are omnivorous feeders, they may be said to eat everything except dogs, snakes, the *hulak* monkey, and lizards. They like rice, when they can get it; for sometimes the out-turn of their fields does not last them more than a few months. They then have to fall back on Jobstears and millet. They eat arums largely, and for vegetables they cook wild plantains and the young shoots of bamboos and cane plants. The Lyngams are divided up into exogamous clans in the same manner as the Khasis. The clans are overgrown families. The Lyngams have some stories regarding the founders of these clans, of which the following is a specimen:—"A woman was asleep under a *sohbar* tree in the jungle, a flower from which fell on her, and she conceived and bore a female child who was the ancestress of the Nongsohbar clan." Some of the stories of the origins of other clans do not bear repeating. There do not appear to be any hypergamous groups. As with the Khasis, it is a deadly sin to

nure and chemical fertilizers. Both level land and hillsides are cultivated by the same hand techniques: 3 × 6-foot patches are fashioned with walkways between, sods are overturned within the patches and allowed to dry, the sods are burned slowly and the ashes spread over the soil, and finally the seed is sown, either broadcast or sunk with the aid of the typical Khasi hoe. The coldest part of the upland enjoys a two-crop year, and Khasis often double crop as well. Paddy has long been found in the lowlands, in parts of Jaintia and Bhoi, the only places where the plow is found. Nowadays paddy is more and more seen in the uplands, together with a simple terracing and irrigation technology. Many upland Khasis have house gardens in which they raise a wide variety of vegetables, including pumpkins, cabbage, radishes, sweet potatoes, eggplant, and many others. Important crops in Bhoi country are paddy rice, lac, caoutchouc, cotton, bananas, and pineapples; in War, they are betel nut, pan leaf, oranges, and sugar cane. **Fishing and hunting.** Fishing is done by poisoning streams, but this is a subsistence activity only in the southern foothills. Hunting was formerly by bow and arrow or by traps, including spring guns and pitfalls, but was always primarily a sport. [Cf. Stegmiller 1925.] **Gathering.** Khasis once gathered about 150 species of wild plants, most of them for food, but some for medicine. Thrifty villagers still gather food plants, but there is no real dependence on gathering. Medicinal plants continue to be very important. **Domestic animals.** Fowl, goats, pigs, and cattle are bred both for meat and sacrifice. Milk was formerly not utilized, but is now so popular that specialists keep herds of milch cows. Pigs are used as village scavengers, but some also receive prepared food. Cattle and goats forage freely in the fields during the winter, but are herded by a communally hired herdsboy during the agricultural season. Most households keep chickens, primarily for their eggs, and a few keep ducks. A few horses are also seen. Dogs are pariahs, except for hunting dogs. Cats are popular. **Food and stimulants.** The staple food of Khasis is boiled rice, together with the dried fish which is imported from Sylhet. Boiled beef, pork, and chicken are relished, but beyond the means of most. Meals are taken twice a day, in the morning and evening, although farmers also take a midday meal in the field, and others may take tea and cold sweet potatoes or rice bread. Certain foods are taboo to certain sibs. Stimulants are extremely common, especially betel nut, which is often accompanied by a bit of tobacco. Tobacco is also smoked as cigarettes and in hookah and other pipes. Every village has one or more household taverns, where distilled rice whisky is cooked and sold by the glass and by the bottle. Imported opium had spread widely in the malarious Bhoi country, but controls instituted in the 1940s have been fairly successful. All stimulants were once taken by men, women, and

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133 they form rapids, the waters precipitating themselves down deep, rocky gorges and chasms, choked with huge boulders. Some of these gorges are very beautiful; the streams, being hemmed in between stupendous mountains and rocks covered with primeval forest, run in narrow but very deep channels swarming with fish. No islands or lakes are formed by any of the rivers, although several of them have large, deep pools. They are all unfordable during the rains.

312 UTILIZATION OF THE WATER SUPPLY.—None of the rivers are utilized as a motive power for turning machinery, although the streams on the higher plateaux might be easily turned to such an account. Their waters, however, are extensively used for the purposes of irrigation, and the hill people display great ingenuity in cutting channels or aqueducts for leading the water on to their [365] fields. It is in this manner that the Civil Station of Shillong receives its water supply. Aqueducts convey water to the houses of all the European residents; and branch channels from the main aqueduct flow through the *bázár*, and along the streets occupied [226] by the native inhabitants. No fishing towns exist in the hills; but [563] near where the rivers debouch upon the plain are some valuable fisheries, which are annually let in farm, the lessees being generally Bengálís. These fisheries yield an annual Government revenue of about £300. Embankments in order to protect the land against floods do not exist. A few embankments, or rather dams, are thrown across narrow valleys between hills, so as to create reservoirs for water. At Shillong there are a few tanks thus formed, which are both useful and ornamental.

135 MINERALS, ETC.—Coal and limestone, both of excellent quality, are found in abundance. Lower Bengal obtains nearly the whole of its lime supply from the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills. The lime is known as 'Sylhet lime,' and is obtained by quarrying from the beds of stone which line the base of the mountains along the whole length of the Sylhet boundary. The supply is literally inexhaustible. Coal out-crops at Cherrá Púnjí, Lá-ká-dong, Shellá, Máo-syn-rám, and at several other places; but as a rule it is scattered, and found in places difficult of access. The coal, however, is of excellent quality, and leaves very little ash. Stone, well adapted for building purposes, is also found. Ironstone exists almost everywhere throughout the Hills, but principally in the dependent States of Khyrim, Nongspung, Cherrá, and Mylliem. In former years the Khásiás were

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at Dárjiling, who reported unfavourably on them. They have since been made over to the Siem of Nongklao, who is responsible for their being kept clear of weeds and protected against fire. Up to the close of 1875–76 the total expenditure had been Rs. 672, or £67, 4s. od.

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FERÆ NATURÆ.—Tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, buffaloes, *mithuns* or wild cows, bears, leopards, wolves, jackals, foxes, wild hog, and several kinds of deer abound in the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills. The [224] [648] expense of keeping down tigers in the shape of Government rewards amounted to £44, 10s. od. in 1869-70. The rate of reward now paid is Rs. 25 or £2, 10s. od. per head. No rewards have ever been given for the destruction of venomous serpents. The number [165] of deaths from wild beasts and snake-bite reported to the police amounted to 28 in 1866-67, 18 in 1867-68, 16 in 1868-69, and 26 in 1869-70. The small game found in the Hills consists of black partridges, hill partridges, quails, ducks, teal, snipe, and woodcocks. 226 The *mahsír* fish is caught in the rivers. No regular trade is carried 439 on in the skins of wild animals; and, except in the case of wild elephants, the *ferœ naturæ* are not made to contribute towards the wealth of the people.

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ELEPHANTS.—Wild elephants are found in the lower ranges of the hills, and in the gorges opening on the valleys of the Surmá and the Brahmaputra. Each State in the Khásí Hills and each dolloiship in the Jáintiá Hills constitutes a separate hunting circle or *mahál*. In the Khásí States the conditions of elephant hunting are governed by rules framed in 1874-75 by the Chief Commissioner, and approved by the Government of India. These rules provide, (1) that the British Government will make no claim to royalty on account of elephants caught in the Khásí Hills; (2) that one half of the proceeds of the sale of each elephant caught shall be paid over to the chief whose State forms the *mahál*, and the other half retained by Government; (3) that if a chief wishes to hunt elephants on his own account, the *mahál* composed of his State shall be reserved from sale, and a special arrangement shall be made with him on the basis that half the proceeds of the hunting shall accrue to Government. A special form of hunting licence in accordance with these rules has been settled by the Chief Commissioner. In the Jáintiá Hills, as being British territory, the ordinary Assam rules are in force, in accordance with which leases of the *mahálls* are sold at intervals of two years to the highest bidder at